

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated January 2, 2008. In the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-3, 5, 8 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Yang (US 6,253,933), and rejected claims 9 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yang in view of Goldberg et al. (US 6,015,052). Claims 1, 2, 5, 10 and 11 are objected to because of some informalities.

Claims 1 and 3-11 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 5, 10 and 11 have been amended. Claim 2 has been cancelled, and the subject matter thereof has been incorporated into claim 1. Claims 3, 8 and 9 stand as pervious presented. Claims 4, 6 and 7 are withdrawn for consideration.

In response to the objections, claims 1, 5, 10 and 11 have been amended as suggested by the Examiner. It is believed these objections are overcome and should be withdrawn.

In response to the rejection of claim 1, Applicant currently has amended claim 1 to clearly express the subject matter thereof. Applicant traverses the rejection thereof as following reasons.

Claim 1, as currently amended, recites:

A shelf connector, comprising:

a sliding sleeve (1) formed with a locking body (12), the locking body (12) provided with an open groove (11) along the axial direction of the sliding sleeve (1), the locking body (12) provided on both sides of the open groove (11) with clasping portion (12a/12c), at least one introducing section (12b) being provided on the sliding sleeve (1) above the clasping portions (12a/12c); and

a locking sleeve (2) having a **single locking groove (21), a width of the open**

groove (11) being urged to reduce by the insertion of the clasp portion (12a/12c) into the locking groove (21), wherein **a width of the locking groove (21) is slightly smaller than a width of the clasp portions (12a/12c)**, the sliding sleeve (1) is an open structure for **directly clasp on a supporting rod (3)**, an inner wall of the sliding sleeve (1) opposing to the open groove (11) is axially provided with a hinge (13) functioning as a shaft-and-pin mechanism; the inner wall of the sliding sleeve (1) adjacent to the hinge (13) is **axially provided with a rib (15) for positioning the opening and closing actions of the hinge (13)**. (Emphasis added)

First, as disclosed in col. 2, lines 25-27 of Yang, also shown in FIG. 4 “the tenon 73 and the mortise 72 of the male piece 31 are engaged with the mortise 72 and the tenon 73 of the female piece 32”. According to the disclosure, the male piece 31 and the female piece 32 are locked by the engagement of the mortise 72 and the tenon 73. Further, as shown in FIG. 4, the retaining piece 9 has two openings 91 with each opening 91 engaging with one retaining seat 8 of the retaining body 71. However, in amended claim 1, “a locking sleeve (2) having **a single locking groove (21), a width of the open groove (11) being urged to reduce by the insertion of the clasp portion (12a/12c) into the locking groove (21)**, wherein **a width b of the locking groove (21) is slightly smaller than a width a of the clasp portions (12a/12c)**”. That is, in amended claim 1, the two locking bodies (12) are locked by **the insertion of the clasp portion (12a/12c) into the single locking groove (21) of the locking sleeve (2)**. That is, no reducing action of the width of the open groove (11) is disclosed or taught when inserting the clasp portion (12a/12c) into the locking groove (21) in Yang, so the sliding sleeve (1) can shrink and be locked to the supporting rod (3). Otherwise, only one locking groove (21) is recited in amended claimed

1 for locking the two locking bodies (12). Better locking effect will be achieved than locking the male piece 31 and the female piece 32 with two separate retaining seats 8 into two openings 91 as disclosed in Yang. Therefore, the structure of the rack disclosed in Yang is distinct from the shelf connector of amended claim 1.

Second, as disclosed in col. 2, lines 21-25 of Yang, also shown in FIG. 1, “the locating pieces 2 are located on the upright support rod 1...The locating pieces 2 are embraced by the holding piece 3...” According to the disclosure, the holding piece 3 is indirectly attached to the support rod 1 by attaching to the locating pieces 2. The locating pieces 2 and the holding piece 3 are cooperated to attach to the support rod 1. However, in amended claim 1, **“the sliding sleeve (1) is an open structure for directly clasp on a supporting rod (3)”**. That is, in amended claim 1, only one sliding sleeve (1) is directly attached to the supporting rod (3). Fewer elements are used in amended claim 1 for attaching to the rod. Otherwise, when the a height of the sliding sleeve (1) needs adjustment on the supporting rod (3) in amended claimed 1, the locking sleeve (2) can be removed from the sliding sleeve (1), so the sliding sleeve (1) is recovered and can be moved along the supporting rod (3) directly. However, as disclosed in col. 2, lines 66-67, and lines 1-2 of Yang, also shown in FIG. 1, “Each of locating pieces 2 is formed of two semi-cylindrical symmetrical parts 2A”. If the locating pieces 2 and the holding piece 3 are both adjusted on the support rod 1. The two semi-cylindrical symmetrical parts 2A must be disassembled and reinstalled on other section of the support rod 1. Thus, an inconvenient operation will be executed in Yang compared with the shelf connector in amended claim 1. Therefore, the structure of the rack disclosed in Yang is distinct from the shelf connector of amended claim 1.

Third, as disclosed in col. 2, lines 66-67, and lines 1-2 of Yang, also shown in FIG. 1,

“Each of locating pieces 2 is formed of two semicylindrical symmetrical parts 2A, each of which is provided in an inner wall thereof with a plurality of circular ribs 21.” As also disclosed in col. 2, lines 22-24, “the circular ribs 21 of the locating pieces 2 are retained in the circular grooves 11 of the upright support rod 1.” And as discussed above, the locating pieces 2 are embraced by the holding piece 3. The holding piece 3 is retained to the locating pieces 2 by the engagement of the male piece 31 with the female piece 32. However, in amended claim 1, “the inner wall of the sliding sleeve (1) adjacent to the hinge (13) is **axially provided with a rib (15) for positioning the opening and closing actions of the hinge (13)**”. Therefore, the structure of the rack disclosed in Yang is distinct from the shelf connector of amended claim 1. Thus, Yang fails to disclose the shelf connector of amended claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that amended claim 1 is patentable over Yang under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) or 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of amended claim 1 are respectfully requested.

Applicants submit dependent claims 3, 5, 8-11 based on their dependency on claim 1 directly or indirectly, are now also in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Entry of the amendments and issuance of a Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully requested. If any additional fee is required, please charge Deposit Account Number 502751.

Accordingly, the application is deemed to be in condition for allowance and such a Notice is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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